

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-14. (Canceled)

15. (Previously Presented) A method of, in an operation- performing-apparatus line including a plurality of operation performing apparatuses which perform respective predetermined operations related to a circuit substrate and a substrate conveyor which extends through each of the operation performing apparatuses and conveys the circuit substrate to said each operation performing apparatus, exchanging at least one first exchangeable constituent element of at least one operation performing apparatus of the plurality of operation performing apparatuses, with at least one second constituent element, said at least one operation performing apparatus including an element stocker, a transferring head movable relative to the element stocker, and at least one apparatus-side element-holding portion for holding said at least one first exchangeable constituent element, the method comprising the steps of

causing an element carrier plate to hold said at least one second constituent element such that said at least one second constituent element is detachable from the element carrier plate,

causing the substrate conveyor to convey the element carrier plate from one of opposite ends of the operation-performing- apparatus line toward an other end thereof,

stopping the element carrier plate in said at least one operation performing apparatus,

automatically transferring, with the transferring head of said at least one operation performing apparatus, said at least one second constituent element from the element carrier plate to the element stocker of said at least one operation performing apparatus, and

automatically replacing said at least one first constituent element held by said at least one apparatus-side element-holding portion of said at least one operation performing apparatus, with said at least one second constituent element transferred to the element stocker.

16. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein the element carrier plate is caused to hold the respective second constituent elements corresponding to the respective first constituent elements of at least two operation performing apparatuses of the plurality of operation performing apparatuses, said at least two operation performing apparatuses including respective transferring heads, respective element stockers, and respective apparatus-side element-holding portions for holding the respective first constituent elements, and wherein the element carrier plate is stopped in each of said at least two operation performing apparatuses, the respective second constituent elements are automatically transferred, with the respective transferring heads, from the element carrier plate to the respective element stockers, and the respective first constituent elements held by the respective apparatus-side element-holding portions are automatically replaced with the respective second constituent elements transferred to the respective elementstockers.

17. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein said at least one operation performing apparatus comprises at least one component mounting apparatus having a mounting head functioning as the transferring head and including, as said at least one apparatus-side element-holding portion, at least one nozzle-holding portion which holds, as said at least one first constituent element, at least one first suction nozzle such that said at least one first suction nozzle is detachable from said at least one nozzle-holding portion, wherein said at least one first suction nozzle holds, by suction, at least one electronic-circuit component and mounts said at least one electronic-circuit component on the circuit substrate which is conveyed by the substrate conveyor and is held by a substrate holding device of said at least one component mounting apparatus, and wherein a nozzle carrier plate as the element carrier plate is caused to hold, as said at least one second constituent element,

at least one second suction nozzle, and is conveyed by the substrate conveyor to said at least one component mounting apparatus, and said at least one first suction nozzle held by said at least one nozzle- holding portion of the mounting head is automatically returned to the nozzle carrier plate.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein said at least one operation performing apparatus comprises at least one component mounting apparatus having a mounting head functioning as the transferring head and including, as a first one of a plurality of said apparatus-side element-holding portions, a head-side nozzle-holding portion which holds, as one of a plurality of said first constituent elements, one of a plurality of first suction nozzles such that said one first suction nozzle is detachable from the head-side nozzle-holding portion, wherein said one first suction nozzle holds, by suction, an electronic-circuit component and mounts the electronic-circuit component on the circuit substrate which is conveyed by the substrate conveyor and is held by a substrate holding device of said at least one component mounting apparatus, wherein said at least one component mounting apparatus can automatically exchange said one first suction nozzle held by the head-side nozzle-holding portion of the mounting head, with an other of the first suction nozzles that is held by a nozzle stocker as each of (a) the element stocker and (b) a second one of the plurality of apparatus-side element-holding portions, and wherein a plurality of plate-side nozzle-holding portions of a nozzle carrier plate as the element carrier plate are caused to hold, as a plurality of said second constituent elements, a plurality of second suction nozzles, respectively, the nozzle carrier plate is conveyed by the substrate conveyor to said at least one component mounting apparatus, and at least one of the first suction nozzles that is held by the nozzle stocker is automatically exchanged, with the mounting head, with at least one of the second suction nozzles held by the nozzle carrier plate.

19. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 18, wherein the operation-performing-apparatus line comprises a component-mounting-apparatus line including a plurality of component mounting apparatuses which are arranged in an array, and wherein the substrate conveyor is caused to convey the nozzle carrier plate to an arbitrary one of the component mounting apparatuses, and said at least one first suction nozzle held by the nozzle stocker of the arbitrary component mounting apparatus is automatically exchanged with said at least one of the second suction nozzles held by the nozzle carrier plate.

20. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 19, wherein the plurality of component mounting apparatuses comprise a plurality of modules, respectively, which have respective identical constructions and which are arranged adjacent to each other to constitute the component-mounting- apparatus line, and wherein said at least one first suction nozzle held by the nozzle stocker of an arbitrary one of the modules is automatically exchanged with said at least one of the second suction nozzles held by the nozzle carrier plate.

21. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein the element stocker of said at least one operation performing apparatus which performs the predetermined operation related to the circuit substrate includes said at least one apparatus-side element-holding portion that holds said at least one first exchangeable constituent element that is needed to perform the operation, and wherein the method comprises automatically exchanging said at least one first constituent element held by said at least one apparatus-side element-holding portion of the element stocker, with said at least one second constituent element held by the element carrier plate.

22. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 21, wherein said at least one operation performing apparatus includes, in addition to the element stocker, an additional element-holding portion which holds one of a plurality of said first constituent elements such that said one first constituent element is detachable from the additional

element-holding portion, wherein said at least one operation performing apparatus performs the operation with said one first constituent element held by the additional element-holding portion, and wherein said at least one operation performing apparatus includes an exchanging device which automatically exchanges said one first constituent element held by the additional element-holding portion, with an other of the first constituent elements that is held by the element stocker, and automatically exchanges said at least one first constituent element held by the element stocker, with said at least one second constituent element held by the element carrier plate.

23. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 22, wherein said at least one operation performing apparatus comprises a component mounting apparatus having, as the element stocker, a nozzle stocker which holds, as said at least one first constituent element, at least one of a plurality of first suction nozzles, and additionally having a mounting head including, as the additional element-holding portion, a head-side nozzle-holding portion which holds, as said one first constituent element, one of the first suction nozzles such that said one first suction nozzle is detachable from the head-side nozzle-holding portion, wherein said one first suction nozzle holds, by suction, an electronic-circuit component, and mounts the electronic-circuit component on the circuit substrate which is conveyed by the substrate conveyor and is held by a substrate holding device of the component mounting apparatus, wherein the component mounting apparatus can automatically exchange said one first suction nozzle held by the head-side nozzle-holding portion of the mounting head, with an other of the first suction nozzles that is held by the nozzle stocker, and wherein a plurality of plate-side nozzle-holding portions of a nozzle carrier plate as the element carrier plate are caused to hold, as a plurality of said second constituent elements, a plurality of second suction nozzles, respectively, the nozzle carrier plate is conveyed by the substrate conveyor to the component mounting apparatus, and the component mounting apparatus automatically exchanges said at

least one first suction nozzle held by the nozzle stocker, with at least one of the second suction nozzles held by the nozzle carrier plate.

24-36. (Canceled)

37. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein each one of said at least one first constituent element and said at least one second constituent element includes an identification-code recording portion where an identification code which identifies said each one constituent element from an other of said at least one first constituent element and said at least one second constituent element is recorded, wherein said at least one operation performing apparatus further includes a reading device which reads the respective identification codes from the respective identification-code recording portions of said at least one first constituent element and said at least one second constituent element, and wherein, based on the respective identification codes read by the reading device, said at least one first constituent element held by said at least one apparatus-side element-holding portion is automatically replaced with said at least one second constituent element transferred to the element stocker.

38. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 21, wherein each one of said at least one first constituent element and said at least one second constituent element includes an identification-code recording portion where an identification code which identifies said each one constituent element from an other of said at least one first constituent element and said at least one second constituent element is recorded, wherein said at least one operation performing apparatus further includes a reading device which reads the respective identification codes from the respective identification-code recording portions of said at least one first constituent element and said at least one second constituent element, wherein the operation-performing-apparatus line further comprises an element-code memory in which the respective identification codes of said at least one first constituent element held by the element stocker and said at least one second constituent element held by the element carrier

plate are stored, and wherein, based on the respective identification codes stored in the element-code memory and the respective identification codes read by the reading device, said at least one first constituent element held by the element stocker is automatically exchanged with said at least one second constituent element held by the element carrier plate.

39. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, further comprising automatically returning, with the transferring head, said at least one first constituent element from said at least one apparatus-side element-holding portion, to the element stocker.

40. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, further comprising automatically returning, with the transferring head, said at least one first constituent element from said at least one apparatus-side element-holding portion, to the element carrier plate.

41. (Canceled)

42. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~claim 41, wherein the step of~~
~~arranging the operation performing apparatuses comprises~~claim 15, further comprising a step
of arranging the operation performing apparatuses such that each of the operation performing
apparatuses is movable in each of opposite directions that are perpendicular to a circuit-substrate conveying direction in which the circuit substrate is conveyed by the substrate conveyor.

43. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 42, wherein the step of arranging the operation performing apparatuses comprises providing, as the operation performing apparatuses, a plurality of modules having respective identical constructions, on a base, such that each of the modules is movable in said each of the opposite directions on the base.